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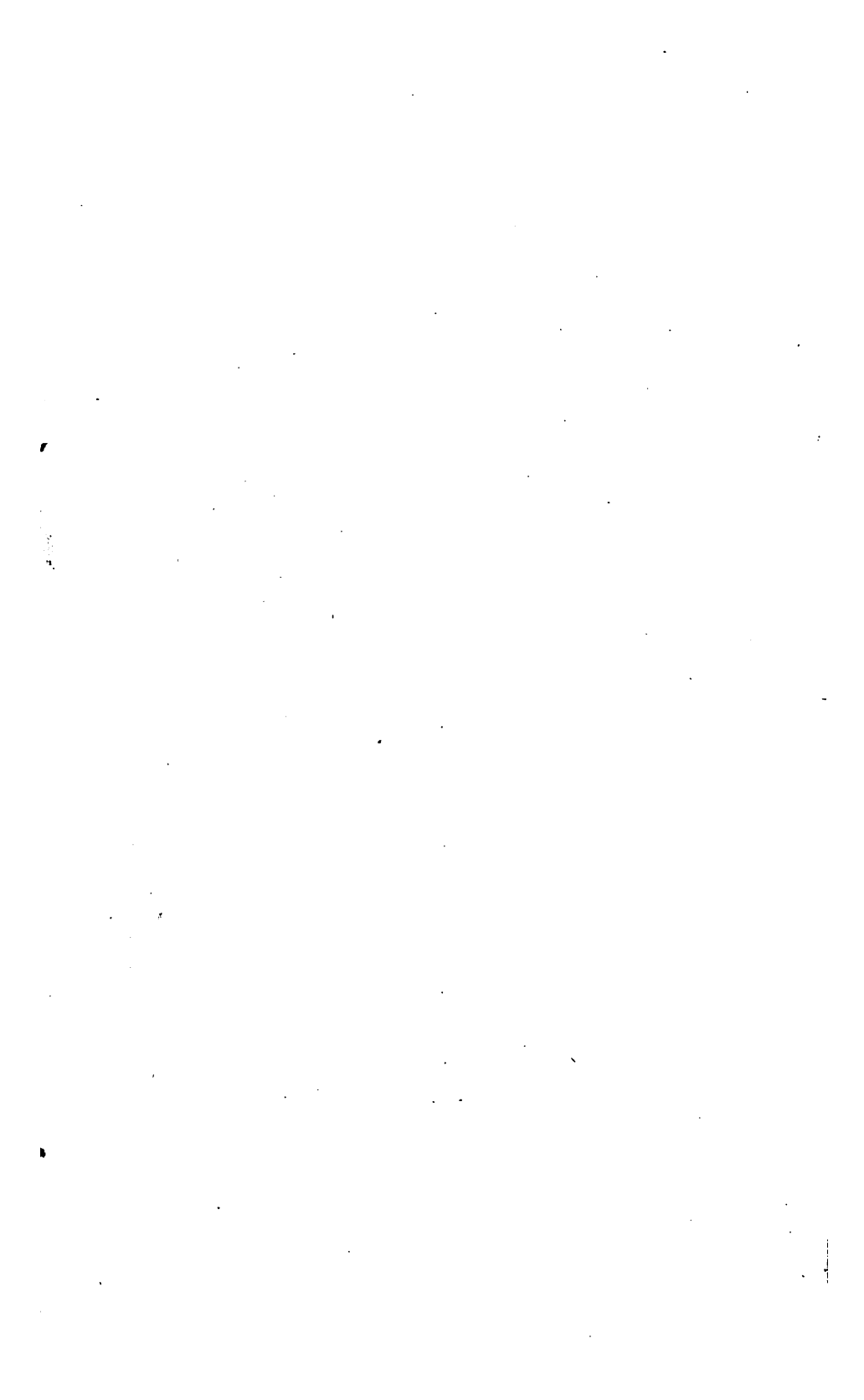
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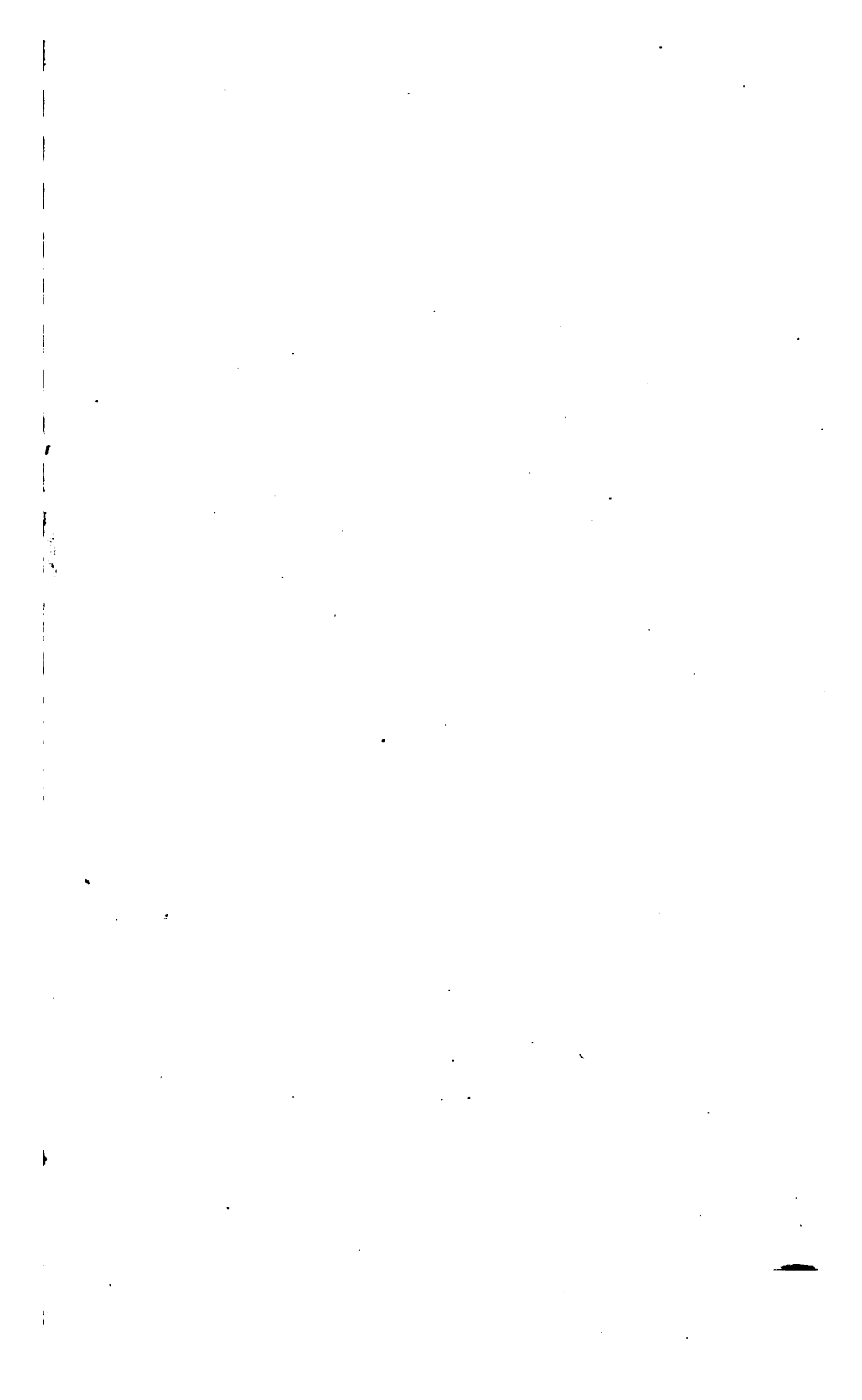
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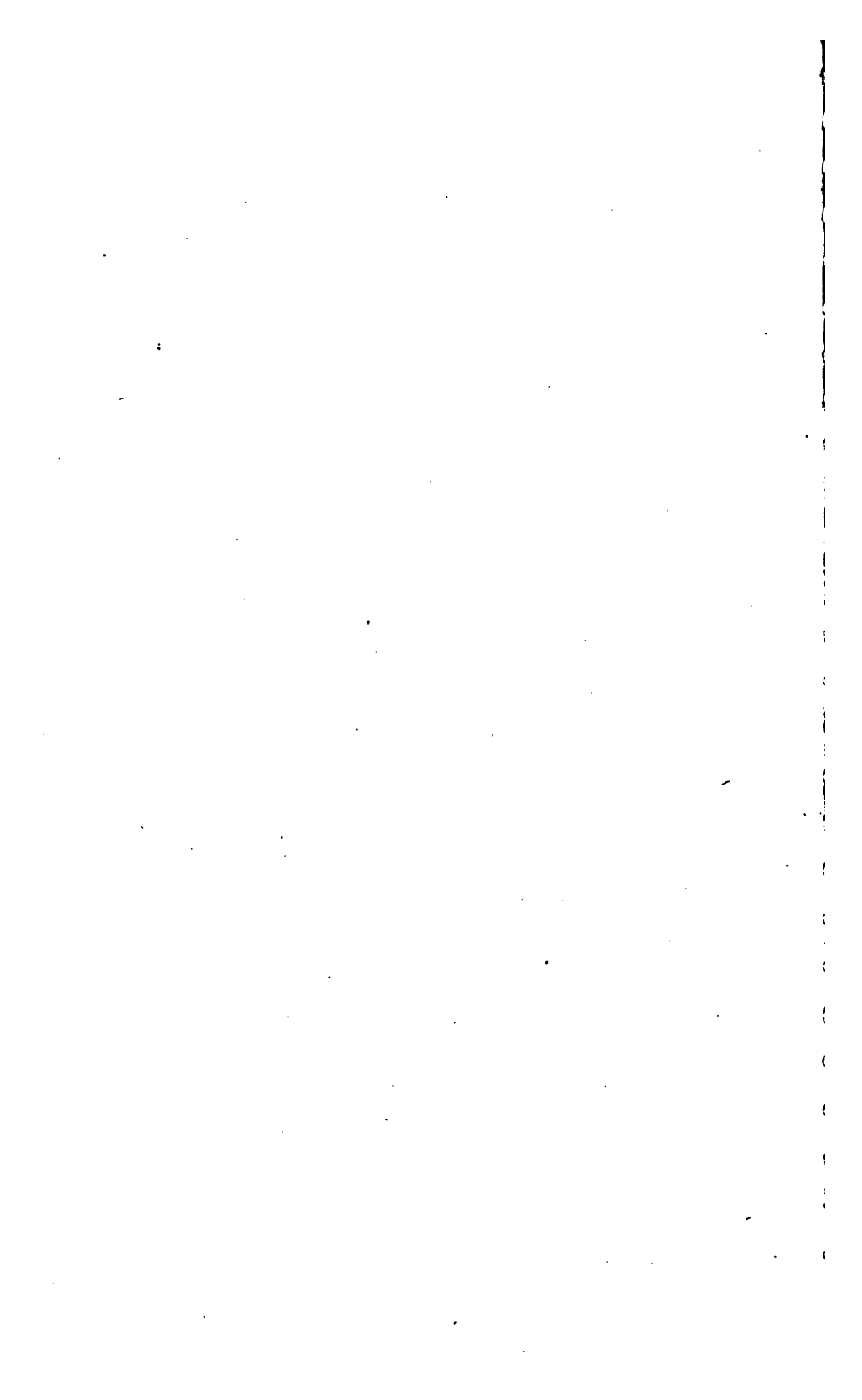


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**ADDRESS**

**OF THE**

**LITERARY ASSOCIATION**

**OF THE**

**FRIENDS OF POLAND,**

**TO THE PEOPLE**

**OF**

**GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.**

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**LONDON :**

**E. DETKENS, BOOKSELLER, STATIONER, &c.**

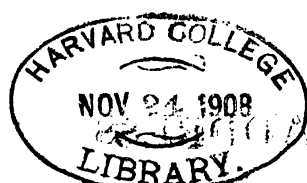
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HEALTH AND WEALTH TALKS



## ADDRESS.

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FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

It is now fourteen years since the "Literary Association of the Friends of Poland" published an address to the people of Great Britain. The noble struggle made by the Poles for the rights, the liberties, and the independence of their country had just terminated: the patriots, neglected and frowned on by all the Governments of Europe, though applauded and admired by all good men, had succumbed before overwhelming numbers. The roar of cannon and the clash of swords were no longer to be heard in Poland; but the blows of the knout, the clank of chains, the groans of captives, the cries of children torn from their mothers' arms, and the wailing of mothers for their ravished offspring resounded in all the length and breadth of the land—and beyond its limits—they reached all the countries of the world, and wherever there was civilization, religion, or humanity, they awakened horror and indignation.

A few men, at that time, deeply impressed with the justice of the Polish cause, and with the power of reason and truth, ultimately to prevail over error and crime, founded this Association. The first act of this body was to publish an address, traced by an immortal hand, that of Thomas Campbell then President of the Association, to the inhabitants of these realms. That address set forth the objects of the Association; of which the chief was, "to collect and diffuse all such information with regard to Poland, as might tend to preserve in the public mind, a lively interest in the condition of that unfortunate country." The Association appealed to the public for support; and claimed from their fellow countrymen the expression of their sympathy for Poland. The appeal was not in vain; the existence of the Association, continued for so many years, proves it—the claim was acknowledged; the debates in Parliament, the national grant for the relief of the Refugees, the records of the City of London, the numerous meetings of different sorts held in the metropolis, and in various parts of the country, attest it.

Having met with such a response to our former address, we trust to be no less favourably received, in appealing to you again, at a moment when events have occurred, on which no friend of Poland can

look unmoved, and which have filled every Polish bosom with a tumult of agitation, and of hope.

All the reasons which made men take so much interest in Poland then, exist still; they have been strengthened by the uninterrupted and unrelenting tyranny of Russia.

The right of a nation, to shake off the rule of foreigners, is unquestionable. It is a right conferred by God and nature. The Poles exercised that right, and in their mode of doing so, displayed a degree at once, of valour and of generosity, that won for them from the world the appellation of heroes. From the moment that they were reduced to subjection, up to the present instant, they have been harassed by the Russians with every species of persecution, from the violation of the first and every succeeding amnesty, to the barbarities inflicted on the Nuns of Minsk. The catalogue of their grievances would be too long to go through. But first, there is that grievance for which the removal of all the others would not compensate; and which, to all the others, adds an envenomed sting—they are ruled by a FOREIGN Government. Then they have been deprived of the constitution which the Emperor swore before God to maintain; their language is proscribed, their public schools and universities shut up; their religion (placed by the

constitution under the special care of the Government) is persecuted, their churches converted into places of worship of another faith, the ministers of their religion beaten, imprisoned, and tortured, for the purpose of persuading them to set examples of apostacy; thousands of families have been forcibly removed from their native places, and transplanted into distant regions; and—foulest of all enormities—children have been torn from their mothers' arms, and carried into the interior of Russia, to be made Russians of. The country is drained of its youth every year by enormous levies of recruits for the army, most commonly sent to perish in the unrighteous war waged by the Autocrat in Circassia. The names and limits of the provinces have been changed, and for the old Palatinates with their well known names, some new divisions with new fangled Russian appellations have been substituted. Even the national costume has been forbidden. Add to this the confiscation of the estates of the most distinguished nobles, and other inhabitants, to an amount scarcely credible;\* add to this heavy tax-

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\* So early as 1832, the year after the close of the revolution, the value of property confiscated in the single province of Volhynia, was not much short of one million sterling; and the whole amount of property confiscated throughout Poland, was computed at the enormous sum of 272,700,000 francs, or very nearly 11 millions of pounds sterling.

ation, and a rigorous system of espionage, from which no class and no person is exempt, to which the most distinguished and the most obscure are alike subject, which carries terror and distrust into every family, and a sense, at once, of insecurity and degradation into every heart. In such manner has this unhappy country been governed ever since the suppression of the last revolt. In such manner has it been governed for fifteen years, not of content certainly, but of submission. Severity may be necessary, as it undoubtedly is usual, for a certain time after insurrection has been quelled—but what Government with any pretensions to humanity, continues to treat its people like rebels for fifteen years after they have submitted to its rule? The truth is, the Autocrat has entered upon an enterprise that is *inhuman*. He seeks not to govern, but to extirpate a great nation—a nation great in numbers, great in valour and intelligence, great in reputation, in ancient associations, and the renown of glorious achievements, and services rendered to the world in peace and war. He is endeavouring to destroy this nation, to amalgamate it with the degraded inhabitants of Russia, and to rule over a population inhabiting the plains and cities of old Poland, but, in language, in sentiment, in religion, and in manners, no longer Poles. The attempt, we hesitate not to

denounce as an enormous crime—its accomplishment we hold to be impossible—but how much guilt will be incurred by those who prosecute—or permit it! how much suffering and misery, by those against whom it is directed!

You are too often told, fellow countrymen, by statesmen whose principle is expediency, and by their partisans, when questions relating to foreign nations are brought before you, that with these you have no concern. If this country had never interfered in the affairs of the Continent, or even had ceased to do so, this might be said with some propriety; or, at any rate, with consistency. But it will not do to interfere whenever it suits you—and when it does not, to cant about the duty of not meddling with what does not belong to you, whilst suffering the grossest injustice to be perpetrated in defiance of treaties, which give you the most distinct right of interference.

The principle of non-interference with the *internal* affairs of any Foreign Nation is wholly distinct from the question, how far a state, or a number of states, is justified in interfering to prevent a nation being taken possession of or destroyed by foreign power. But without attempting to decide this question, we boldly affirm that this country has, in virtue of treaties contracted between her and all the powers of Europe, the most unquestionable right to interfere on behalf of the

Poles. It may, indeed, be said, that we had no right to sign any such treaty, and to divide and parcel out countries without the consent of their inhabitants; but if we had a right to sign the treaty, it cannot be denied that we have a right to demand, from those who were parties to it, its enforcement. The treaty of Vienna was not made between us and the Poles, (who were never consulted about it) but between us and the three powers of the North, and all the principal powers of Europe. England, France, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, were the contracting parties.

In the treaty of Vienna, or, as it is sometimes termed, the General Act of Congress, the arrangement respecting Poland was the first in order, as it was admitted to be the first in importance.

The first Article of that treaty stipulates as follows :—

ARTICLE I. “The Duchy of Warsaw, with the  
“exception of the provinces and districts which are  
“otherwise disposed of by the following Articles, is  
“united to the Russian Empire, to which it shall be  
“irrevocably attached BY ITS CONSTITUTION, and be  
“possessed by His Majesty the Emperor of all the  
“Russias, his heirs and successors in perpetuity. His  
“Imperial Majesty reserves to himself, to give to this  
“state, enjoying a distinct administration, the interior  
“improvement which he shall judge proper. He shall

"assume with his other titles that of the Czar, King of Poland, agreeably to the form established for the titles attached to his other possessions. The Poles who are respective subjects of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, shall obtain a REPRESENTATION AND NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, regulated according to the degree of political consideration, that each of the Governments to which they belong, shall judge expedient and proper to grant them."

"Thus Poland," to quote the words of the most powerful advocate of the Polish cause, the late Mr. CUTLAR FERGUSSON, "was to be bound to Russia, not by hereditary descent, not by conquest, not by right of any description on the part of Russia, but by its constitution secured to it by treaty. By the same article the other Polish Provinces were to receive a representation and national institutions; thus stipulating, for the security of Europe, that the Duchy of Warsaw should form an independent kingdom under the Emperor of Russia, but protected and guarded by its constitution, and strengthened by a powerful mass of nationality contained in the other Polish provinces, to whom a representation and national institutions were to be given."

By the treaty of Vienna it was intended, as well for the happiness of the Poles themselves as for the security of Europe, that the nationality of Poland should be



preserved. Any act, therefore, of any of the contracting parties having a tendency to destroy that nationality, must be regarded as contravening the spirit of the treaty, and as giving a right to all, or any of, the other parties to interfere.

But not only has the spirit of the treaty been contravened, its direct stipulations have been shamefully infringed.

The constitution, in virtue of which alone Poland became subject to Russia, and, to the maintenance of which, the Emperors Alexander and Nicholas bound themselves by the following oath publicly made,—“I swear and promise before God and upon the Holy Gospels, to maintain and execute to the utmost of my power the constitutional charter,” this constitution after being violated in every article, was at length in 1832, formally abrogated.

A more flagrant violation of the treaty of Vienna cannot be imagined.

This, indeed, has been admitted by all the statesmen in this country, who have approached the subject. At the time it took place, that infraction of the treaty was not only admitted by the Minister of the Crown, but it formed the subject of repeated remonstrance by him to Russia, on the part of the British Government.

In 1833, Lord Palmerston stated in the House of Commons, that he had remonstrated against it with the

Russian Government ; and, having received the reply of the Cabinet of St. Petersburg, had rejoined in the following terms ; "that having taken into full consideration all that the Russian Government had stated in support of their view of the case, the English Government still adhered to the opinion previously expressed that the true and fair interpretation of the treaty of Vienna, required that the Polish constitution should remain as before the revolution, and that *Russia had no right to abolish it.*"

The same Minister, on the same occasion, declared, that "*no circumstances could arise, under which the English Government could give their sanction or acquiescence to the arrangements which the Emperor had made.*"

At a much more recent period, in 1842, Sir Robert Peel, then, as now, Prime Minister, recognised our right of interference based on the treaty of Vienna. He declared that "he could not as a public man say, that in his opinion, the policy of Russia was wise or safe. He spoke of the policy of Russia in reference to Poland ; and, after what had passed at Vienna, this country had a right to discuss any particular line of policy which might be adopted towards Poland."

Without then enquiring how far we were right in signing the treaty of Vienna, without by any means declaring, that, in the absence of any such treaty, we

should not have a right to interfere in behalf of a nation in the situation of Poland, we affirm that, under the treaty of Vienna, we have a right, which cannot be denied by any of the contracting parties, to interfere for its enforcement.

But we are far from placing the rights of the Poles on any such narrow base.

A nation can never lose the right of independence, or be bound to submit to the rule of foreigners. A wise and beneficent foreign Government may conciliate those it holds in subjection, disarm their prejudices, and captivate their affections. Such a Government, continued for a length of time, will, most commonly, produce that result, or even failing to do so, it may, in some measure, diminish the sympathy of the world for its resisting subjects; for the sympathy of all uninterested parties will ever be with those who rise against a foreign yoke. But no excellence of administration, no lapse of time, can avail to deprive a nation, so long as it continues a nation, of its right to free itself from the rule of foreigners. Greece, after centuries of enslavement, shook off the dominion of the Turks. Despite the faults of her people, she carried with her universal sympathy—none, at least, questioned her right of resistance.

How strong, then, is the case of Poland, held in

subjected by a foreign Government, which is neither wise nor beneficent, but, on the contrary, tyrannical and oppressive; whose system is not conciliation but terror; which foment dissension between classes, and adopts every measure that can tend to degrade, impoverish, and irritate the people; whose object is to denationalize, and whose rule is founded on no right—not that of conquest, for it never conquered—not that of ancient prescription, for it is not a century since the first attempts were made against Poland's independence, and scarce a dozen years have passed consecutively, without a protest, sealed with the blood of the inhabitants, against the condition imposed on them—not even that of treaties for these, which form the only semblance of a right, have been flagrantly violated. Poland is subjected by no right; but that of power—which, of itself, can never form a right, and, in this case, is an enormous wrong. The justice, indeed, of Poland's cause is universally admitted. Where is the writer, not a hireling of the spoliating Governments, that has contested the rights of Poland? Where the statesman, or the orator, that, in any state paper, or in any public assembly, has ever ventured to deny them?

Is it, then, to be expected, that a high spirited nation, composed of more than twenty millions of

men, inhabiting a country stretching from the Baltic to the Euxine, renowned for valour, remarkable beyond all others, for patriotism, inspired by the recollection of their former power and glory, whose rights are so unquestionable, whose sufferings are so intense, should quietly submit to the ignominy of foreign rule? Is it not certain that such a nation, though kept down for a time, by the iron hand of oppression, will seize every opportunity of shaking off the hated yoke? And will you look upon their struggles unmoved? You who have never submitted to oppression yourselves? You who have set the example of freedom to the world? Will you condemn their attempts, even though they be unsuccessful, even though they be rash, even though they be not always planned with skill or conducted with judgment, even though there be circumstances attending them, which do not carry with them your full approval? Will you not, in the sacredness of the great cause, forget or overlook some errors in the manner of its defence, and whenever Poland struggles to burst her bonds asunder, shall she not have, at least, the sympathy, and the moral support of Britons?

In order to form a just estimate of the conduct of others, there is no better mode than to place ourselves in their position, and consider how we should

act, and how we ought to act, in the like circumstances.

Suppose, for a moment, that by some means or other, this country were brought under the dominion of France. May heaven grant, that so far from any dissension arising between ourselves and that great and glorious people, the bonds of peace and amity may be drawn closer and closer between the two nations ; and that, henceforth, no rivalry may exist between them, but in the arts of peace, and in all that can tend to the welfare and improvement of mankind. Let us suppose, however, for the sake of argument, that such a thing were to happen. That, by some means or other, this island were to be reduced to the condition of a province of the state which is our nearest neighbour. That France ruled us as a conquered country, and took all possible pains to insult and wound our national feelings, to destroy our nationality, and make Frenchmen of us. Suppose that children were seized in our streets, torn from the arms of their shrieking mothers, and carried to France, to be brought up where they could hear no English spoken ; that our young men were compelled to enter the French army, wear French uniforms, serve under French officers, and fight the battles of France in Algeria ; that we saw, instead of the standard of England, the French tricolor

floating on Buckingham Palace and the Tower, that French soldiers paraded our streets; that our ancient counties were abolished, that our land was divided into new districts with strange names, that instead of the counties of Middlesex, of Surrey, of Essex, and of Bucks, we had to speak of the departments of the upper and lower Thames, of the Lea or of the Colne; that we were compelled in the transaction of all business to use the French language, that our Parliament was done away with, our public press gagged; that Marshal Bugeaud, with the title of *Prince de Londres*, was Governor of London; that Cambridge, and Oxford, and Eton, and all our other Universities and Colleges were suppressed; that our Bishops and Clergy were carried into banishment, and that we saw Roman Catholic Priests celebrating high mass in our cathedrals and parish churches.

Suppose that Cornwall was not subject to France, but was made over, as the Grand Duchy of Cornwall, to Spain—that all Scotland north of the Forth was transformed into a province of Sweden—and that Edinburgh, with a small portion of the county in which it stands, was constituted a nominally independent Republic.

Would not our hatred of our foreign rulers be deep and bitter beyond all expression? would not the inhabitants of every part of this island burn to drive out our oppressors, and to be united again as one people—the people of Britain?

And if the rule of Spain in Cornwall were comparatively good, if the Government of Sweden in Scotland were in some degree less oppressive, if the inhabitants of Cornwall were allowed to speak their own language, and the people of Scotland to follow, unmolested, their own religion, would they on that account, not be justified in devising means, and taking up arms, to deliver themselves and their fellow countrymen, throughout the whole extent of Great Britain, from the curse of foreign bondage, and to establish, once more, the independence of the nation?

To carry out the parallel, suppose that in the free City of Edinburgh some young men, ardent in the cause of their country, maddened by the sight of her wrongs, and burning with a noble enthusiasm to restore her to her right position, were to raise the standard of revolt, get possession of the castle, once more unfold to the breeze the well known British flag, and proclaim the freedom and independence of Great Britain. Suppose they were to hold the City for some days, and that there were signs of the insurrection spreading to the highlands of Scotland, and to other parts of the kingdom—is there a British heart which would not beat high with hope and with pride?

Suppose the young patriots of Edinburgh, as is so



often the case with young men, should in their hatred of despotism have fallen into the opposite error—imbibed extreme opinions, and proclaimed them as the principles of the National Government. However much we might deplore their mistake, however much we might be opposed to their politics, should we on that account, ought we, to remain aloof from them? Should we not merge all differences, however great, in the one, incomparably greater object, on which all would be united, the recovery of our independence? Should we not, all those of us that could by active means, those that could not otherwise by their influence and moral support, do all in our power, put every spring in motion, strain every nerve, for the attainment of so glorious an end?

Such, if you can conceive a state of things so dissimilar from any you have ever experienced, you will acknowledge would be your conduct and your duty. Such has been, in circumstances akin to those we have supposed, the conduct of the Poles.

Far be it from us to encourage any hasty and rash attempts at insurrection. On the contrary we deprecate them as unwise and, even, as culpable. The evils necessarily attending on all endeavours to destroy or overthrow any existing Government are so great, so extensive, and so terrible, that those who

embark in such enterprises are not without guilt, unless they have on the one hand adequate cause for resistance, and on the other a reasonable prospect of success. The latter they never can have, even under circumstances the most favourable, unless they be properly prepared. We are anxious to impress on the minds of the Poles the necessity of order, discipline, and union. It is to the absence of these essential qualities, it is to that impatience of authority, even when constituted by themselves, to that presumption which makes every man prone to over-rate his individual importance, and consequently unwilling to be led by those superior, in ability, experience, and information, to himself, that we attribute, in a great measure, the original misfortunes, and subsequent failures of the Poles—and, until these wants be supplied, these defects corrected, with all their valour, and all their heroism, their attempts will be abortive. As friends of Poland it is our duty to speak to them not merely the language of encouragement and applause, but also that of advice, and, if need be, of remonstrance—and we tell them that in order to be free, they must be united. In order to conquer their enemies, they must first conquer themselves. All differences must be composed, all animosities forgotten, all private objects abjured, all classes and all parties must unite for the one grand object of recovering Poland.

We ask the republican, would he not rather see Poland a monarchy under a Polish sceptre, than divided into provinces of three separate Foreign States? We ask the partisan of monarchy, would he not prefer a national republic to a foreign despotism? We ask the communist, if he would not a thousand times rather have either, than the present state of things? Let them each consider what course is most likely, not to flatter his own predilections, not to promote his own views, but to lead to the ultimate restoration of Poland; and, putting aside all other considerations, let him adopt that course, and adhere to it. Leaders they must have—all cannot be chiefs. Let them select those, who, from their abilities, their experience, and their high character, are the most fit to lead them; and in those men let them repose entire confidence, and to them pay implicit obedience. Nor will a transient adhesion, proclaimed in a moment of excitement, suffice. Their attachment must be not only warm but steady. Having selected their chiefs, they must be ready, at their orders, “to bear to live, or dare to die”; to wait with patience, or spring to arms. It is thus, and thus only, that they can hope to succeed.

That their success would prove a blessing to the world, no less than to themselves, we have not the least doubt. In their present condition, they can be of

no real advantage even to the States to which they are subject, but, on the contrary, must be to them a perpetual source of weakness, disquietude, and alarm. The national sentiments of the Pole are indelible. They have been declared so by a statesman of no ordinary sagacity, and one who will not be suspected of undue leaning towards the Poles,—and Sir Robert Peel was never more in the right, than when, in the House of Commons, he proclaimed his conviction, that “to abolish the nationality of Poland was impossible.” It is, consequently, to be expected, that there should be, as there always have been, repeated outbreaks among the inhabitants of that country, repeated attempts, more or less serious, more or less well planned, more or less successful, to throw off the yoke that oppresses them; and so long as they are kept, as they now are, in subjection, no permanent tranquillity is possible in Europe. The position of Poland, occupying the very centre of the Continent, and inhabited by more than twenty millions of brave and intelligent men, renders her a country of the utmost importance. She has in former times, rendered incalculable services to Christendom; and even in her present enslaved and abject condition, she forms a valuable guarantee to the free States of the west, against the encroachments of the despotic northern powers. It is not to

be doubted that the hatred with which the Czar views all free institutions would have impelled him to an attack upon the French in 1830, had not his malignant desires been paralysed by his own danger from Poland—and we have only to consider how great a preponderance Russia would have in Europe, were the Poles well affected to her government, to become aware of the services which even now they are rendering us.

There can, indeed, be little doubt that the establishment of Poland, as an independent state under a constitutional Government, would be one of the greatest benefits that could be conferred upon mankind. It would be desirable for all countries, as ensuring tranquillity, and promoting civilization. It would be peculiarly desirable for England, not only for the above reasons, not only with regard to the feelings of her inhabitants, but also as opening a most valuable market to their industry. There can be no doubt that Poland, under a liberal Government, would make rapid strides in wealth and in population; consequently, the demand for manufactured articles, as well as for colonial produce, would increase in proportion. Of all the people of Europe, the Poles are the least given to manufacturing industry; and as they have abundance of that article, which we require, to exchange with us, it may

be taken, as a matter of course, that a large trade would spring up between the two countries. Moreover, as but a small part of Poland borders on the sea, and the Poles are not addicted to maritime pursuits, they would, in no way, interfere with our shipping interest, but would, on the contrary, promote it.

But is there sufficient ground for anticipating that the Poles, should they succeed in re-conquering their independence, would be wise enough to form a good Government, such as would satisfy the wishes of reasonable men, and contribute to the well-being and security of their own and surrounding countries?

The enemies of Poland are perpetually referring to the defects of the system which prevailed in former times in Poland—to the elective monarchy, the liberum veto, the existence of privileged classes, and the oppressed state of the peasantry. They assert that the Government has always been bad; that the changes that have been attempted, have been all for the benefit of the nobles, to the exclusion of the peasants; and that the restoration of Poland would be the re-establishment of oppression, of anarchy, and confusion. We answer by asserting that there is not a single Pole who contemplates a return to the system so complained of, or to the re-introduction of any one of its defects. These they have

felt, have acknowledged, and, by their acts, condemned: left to themselves, they remedied and removed them. The revolution of 1791 was the spontaneous act of the nobles of Poland. By it, they established, not a Government containing the seeds of anarchy and oppression, but a constitution (the celebrated constitution of the 3rd of May,) which has won universal applause, and of which Kant, the celebrated German philosopher, observed, "*nisi scirem opus humanum esse, divinum crediderim.*" By it the monarchy was made hereditary, legislative chambers were instituted, the *liberum veto* was abolished, and the freedom of all classes, of every individual in the kingdom, was proclaimed. This constitution did not last, it is true, but that was not the fault of the Poles. It promised too well for the advantage, the improvement and stability of Poland, to be tolerated by her tyrannical neighbours; and the three despots of the north, against the laws of nations, against all justice, and to their eternal shame, took up arms to destroy it.

The immortal Kosciuszko, struggling for the independence of his country in 1794, again proclaimed the principles of the constitution; and in his solemn declaration guaranteed to every citizen the fruits of his labour, to every Pole, "liberty founded on reason." In every revolution that has

since taken place, in every Government established by the Poles, provision has been made for the improvement of the condition of the peasants.

It is not true, then, that the patriots of Poland seek only the advantage of a single class; it is not true that they have neglected the rights of the peasants; it is not true that the Government of Poland has always been bad; for the Poles, when acting for themselves, have established a Government containing guarantees for the liberty of all classes on the one hand, and for good order and stability on the other.

Among the Poles are men of talent, of experience, and of high character, distinguished alike for their ardent patriotism, and their sound judgment—men whose very name would be a guarantee to surrounding states, against the adoption of any wild or dangerous system of Government. Under their guidance, it need not be feared that the people, who sixty years ago proclaimed the wise and beneficent Constitution of the 3rd of May, should adopt a Government, founded on principles leading to anarchy or confusion. But is it certain that the inhabitants of Poland would have the wisdom to follow such leaders? Is there no danger that they may be led away by the preachers of doctrines always found captivating to the masses, and which may be thought likely to take peculiar hold on the minds of men?



just emerged into freedom, from the depths of enslavement and oppression?

To say that there is no such danger, would be to say that which would convince nobody, and would betray ignorance of human nature. Such danger there always must be in every state where power emanates from the people; in every free or constitutional state. Even states that have been long established are not free from it, much less those just recovering from revolution. But this danger cannot be, in the mind of any friend of liberty, a reason for leaving the Poles exposed, not to the danger, but to the certainty, of the much greater evils of despotism. The real friends of Poland will neither disregard this danger, on the one hand, nor, on the other, suffer it to deter them from their honest purpose; but they will endeavour to provide against it; and that is to be done by giving moral support to those, whose sound opinions and high character, no less than their abilities and patriotism, render them fit leaders of a great nation. Moreover, this danger is less to be apprehended in Poland, than perhaps in any other country.

There is, among the population, a strong attachment to the higher nobility, many of whom have given undeniable proofs of their desire to ameliorate the condition of the lower classes, and have rendered

services acknowledged by all. The Poles entertain strong sentiments of religion, and are greatly influenced by the clergy, who form an intelligent and highly estimable body, sure to be in favor of moderate views.

It is to be recollected that the Poles do not form a nation that has never enjoyed freedom, and which is, therefore, unlikely to know how to use it. For centuries, all the inhabitants--except a class which, in no country but England, has, till lately, attained to equality with the rest--all the other inhabitants of Poland, were only too free. These were the nobles. The word noble, however, as applied to this class in Poland conveys to an English mind ideas the most erroneous. The nobility there is so numerous, that there are whole villages composed entirely of nobles. It is a common thing for nobles to be found in the most humble occupations. And, as in former days, no man, who was not a noble, could be admitted to the honor of serving his country, there are instances of whole battalions being ennobled at once. At a period when the population of Poland did not extend beyond fifteen millions, the number of the nobles did not fall short of a million. The class designated as noble in Poland, can only be compared to the electoral bodies in constitutional monarchies. France has not at present more than a hundred and fifty

thousand electors ; and, before the reform, England did not reckon above three hundred thousand.

In these countries, admission to the electoral body can be obtained by the acquisition of property only ; in Poland, it was to be earned by services rendered to the State.

These nobles begun long ago to feel the justice and propriety of ameliorating the condition of the peasants, and of admitting all their fellow-countrymen to their own privileges. The famous confederation of Bar in 1768, laid the foundation of reform in Poland. The emancipation of the peasants, proposed in 1780, in the celebrated code of Zamoycki, was rejected by the Diet. So, in our own country, the noble proposals of abolishing the slave-trade, of relieving Protestant Dissenters, and afterwards Roman Catholics, from civil disabilities, the abolition of slavery, and other great and liberal measures, had to encounter long and determined opposition, before the force of truth and reason, vindicated by the efforts of wise and enlightened statesmen, effected their triumph. The emancipation of the peasants in Poland was better received by the Constituent assembly in 1788 ; and in 1791, the famous Constitution of the 3rd of May, which established the liberty of all classes, was unanimously carried.

These reforms were planned and introduced by the enlightened patriots of Poland, in spite of the sinister influence of the neighbouring despots, who never ceased their efforts to counteract, and who at length forcibly overthrew them. They even went the length of signing a treaty in 1775, by which they bound themselves to maintain the existing institutions of Poland—in other words, they guaranteed anarchy. The great reform, established by the Constitution of the 3rd of May, was not the result of popular clamour, nor was it conceded to angry demands, nor to the fear of commotion. Neither was it the effect of any sudden movement of generosity or enthusiasm, like that which, about the same period, impelled the nobles of France, in so remarkable a manner, to appease the discontented masses by the sacrifice of their privileges. It was a peaceable revolution; the work of wise, enlightened, and reflecting men, acting on their long matured and honest convictions, in the midst of profound tranquillity.

The description given of it by Burke, has often been quoted; but coming from that great statesman, certainly no friend to revolutions in general, it has so much authority, and is so true as well as beautiful, that it can scarcely be re-produced too often.

"The state of Poland was such, that there could scarcely exist two opinions, but that a reformation

"of its Constitution, even at some expense of blood,  
 "might be seen without much disapprobation. No  
 "confusion could be feared in such an enterprise,  
 "because the establishment to be reformed was itself a  
 "state of confusion ; a king without authority ; nobles  
 "without union or subordination ; a people without  
 "arts, industry, commerce, or liberty ; no order within,  
 "no defence without ; no effective public force, but a  
 "foreign force, which entered a naked country at will,  
 "and disposed of every thing at pleasure. Here was  
 "a state of things which seemed to invite, and might,  
 "perhaps justify, bold enterprise and desperate experi-  
 "ment. But in what manner was this chaos brought  
 "into order ? The means were as striking to the  
 "imagination, as satisfactory to the reason, and  
 "soothing to the moral sentiments. In contemplating  
 "that change, humanity has every thing to rejoice and to  
 "glory in ; nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to suffer.  
 "So far as it has gone, it probably is the most pure and  
 "defecated public good which ever has been conferred  
 "on mankind. We have seen anarchy and servitude  
 "at once removed ; a throne strengthened for the  
 "protection of the people, without trenching on their  
 "liberties ; all foreign cabal banished, by changing the  
 "Crown from elective to hereditary ; and what was a  
 "matter of pleasing wonder, we have seen a reigning  
 "king, from an heroic love of his country, exerting

"himself with all the toil, the dexterity, the manage-  
 "ment, the intrigue, in favor of a family of strangers,  
 "with which ambitious men labour for the aggrandize-  
 "ment of their own. Ten millions of men in a way  
 "of being freed gradually, and therefore safely to  
 "themselves and the State, not from civil or political  
 "chains, which, bad as they are, only fetter the mind,  
 "but from substantial personal bondage. Inhabitants  
 "of cities, before without privileges, placed in the  
 "consideration which belongs to that improved and  
 "connecting situation of social life. One of the most  
 "proud, numerous, and fierce bodies of nobility and  
 "gentry ever known in the world, arranged only in  
 "the foremost rank of free and generous citizens. Not  
 "one man incurred loss or suffered degradation. All  
 "from the king to the day-labourer, were improved  
 "in their condition. Every thing was kept in its  
 "place and order ; but, in that place and order, every  
 "thing was bettered. To add to this happy wonder  
 "(this unheard of conjunction of wisdom and fortune,)  
 "not one drop of blood was spilled ; no treachery ;  
 "no outrage ; no system of slander more cruel than  
 "the sword ; no studied insults on religion, morals, or  
 "manners ; no spoil ; no confiscation ; no citizen beg-  
 "gared ; none imprisoned ; none exiled ; the whole was  
 "effected with a policy, a discretion, an unanimity and  
 "secrecy, such as have never been before known on

"any occasion ; but such wonderful conduct was re-  
 "served for this glorious conspiracy in favor of the  
 "true and genuine rights and interests of men. Happy  
 "people, if they know how to proceed as they have  
 "begun ! Happy prince, worthy to begin with splen-  
 "dour, or to close with glory, a race of patriots and  
 "of kings : and to leave

A name, which every wind to heaven would bear,  
 Which men to speak, and angels joy to hear.

"To finish all—this great good, as in the instant it is,  
 "contains in it the seeds of all further improvement ;  
 "and may be considered as in a regular progress,  
 "because founded on similar principles, towards the  
 "stable excellency of a British Constitution."

After the overthrow of this monument of Polish  
 wisdom and patriotism, effected by the violent inter-  
 ference of the despots of the north, the Governments  
 successively established in Poland were too much under  
 the influence of Foreign States to be considered  
 national—no argument can therefore be founded upon  
 them. But the events of 1830-31, afford us an  
 opportunity of again appreciating the conduct of the  
 Poles. The mortal struggle, in which they were con-  
 stantly engaged during the short period of their inde-  
 pendence, allowed them but little leisure for the formation  
 of institutions. The Government was only provisional ;

but its acts were not such as to afford grounds of alarm to the friends of stability and order. They displayed no tendency to any wild theories, or utopian ideas. The Constitution granted by the Emperor Alexander under the treaty of Vienna (a Constitution good in itself, but never fairly put in force by its author,) was maintained. The throne, so justly forfeited by the Czar, was indeed declared vacant; nor was any provision actually made to fill it; but it was always understood that, when the nation should have time for permanent organization, the system of Government was to be a constitutional monarchy.

The Poles, in general, have never been addicted to violent doctrines or extreme opinions; no such ideas have been adopted by any of the national Governments that have been established—nor have they ever found favor amongst any large number in the country.

The declamations of some of the Refugees, at popular assemblies in France and England, must not be taken for the voice of the people. It is natural that men, suffering from the evils of despotism, should be disposed to rush into the opposite extreme: but few of these men have played any leading part in Poland. Some of the most vehement amongst them have been discovered to be nothing else but Russian agents in disguise. Many are undoubtedly honest men, and some have, upon reflection, become converted to more temperate views.



The manifesto published by the insurgents at Cracow, might indeed encourage the belief in the spread of extreme opinions in Poland. It has been generally understood as advocating the principles of what is termed communism. It did not, however, convey that impression, originally, to those best acquainted with Polish matters, nor, on examination, does it fairly bear that construction. The question which, after that of their national independence, has, more than any other, for many years, occupied the attention of all Poles of all parties, is that which is termed the emancipation of the peasants. This phrase conveys to English minds ideas wholly different from those which are connected with it by Poles. When we are told that there are two parties amongst the Poles; that one is for the emancipation of the peasants, the other against it; we naturally conclude that the present state of the peasants is bondage; that one party wishes to set them free; the other to retain them in that condition. The truth, however, is, that in a great part of Poland the peasants are already free, and that no Polish patriot, not even the most averse from emancipation, contemplates retaining any one of them, a single day, in a state of serfage. But many persons are desirous of granting to the peasants, as their own property, a portion of the land which they cultivate and for which they now pay a rent, either in money

or labour. These are said to be for emancipation—this is the emancipation that is meant. Others are adverse to this measure, which they regard as an unjustifiable interference with the rights of property. These are described as opponents of emancipation; and it is remarkable that among the latter have been some of the most distinguished noblemen, and largest landowners of Poland, who have, of their own free will, emancipated, as above described, the peasants on their own estates; but who have yet hesitated as to the propriety of a law to compel others to follow their example. Various plans for the adjustment of conflicting interests have been suggested. The question, however, has made such progress, that it now meets with but faint opposition; and it appears to be pretty well understood among Poles of all parties, that on the restoration of their country, some plan of the sort must be adopted. Such a measure would be felt as not a little startling in England, where the rights of property are so jealously guarded. It has, however, been adopted in Prussia, under a Government as anti-revolutionary as can be conceived; a law to that effect having been introduced in 1819, with the full consent of the landowners of that part of Poland which is subject to Prussia, viz.—the Grand Duchy of Posen; and, after a trial of twenty-seven years, it is found to work well. It was to a measure of this nature, that

the expressions in the Cracow manifesto probably alluded ; a measure on which opinions may indeed vary, but which is certainly very far from an equal division of property on communist principles. At all events, whether intending to proclaim these principles or not, no conclusion can be drawn, from this document, as to the general feelings of the people of Poland. The insurrection at Cracow was raised by a few daring, indeed, and high spirited, but obscure individuals ; they were unconnected with any person of consequence, and though none, not even the most eminent person among the Poles, hesitated, as soon as the news arrived, to proclaim their intention, by all possible means to aid and promote it, there has not been, in any quarter, the faintest echo of those principles, which are supposed by some to guide its authors.

Nor can the conduct of the peasants in Galicia be taken as evidence of the general feelings of the peasantry of Poland ; if it were so, there would be, indeed, little hope for that unfortunate country. During the revolution of 1830-31, the peasants throughout the kingdom of Poland displayed the utmost enthusiasm for the national cause ; and such was the alacrity with which, armed with their scythes, they answered the first signal to rise, that, from the difficulty of providing food for such large numbers, it was found necessary to set limits to this levy en masse.

Only a portion of the volunteers, therefore, was organized as regular troops; the rest formed militia. Under the Russian Government the conscription was looked upon with horror, and it was always necessary that recruits should be guarded by a strong escort to prevent their escaping; but the prospect of fighting against their oppressors converted this aversion to the military service into enthusiasm for it. Many regiments of Cavalry were raised by private families, the peasants eagerly volunteering for the service, and following their landlords into the field with all the enthusiasm of the most devoted patriots. These regiments were among the best of the brave army of Poland, and became a terror to the Russians in many a bloody encounter.

A striking instance of the patriotic feelings of the Polish peasantry was afforded by the palatinate of Cracow, which, in four days, furnished no less a number than 60,000 men, armed with scythes.

In the provinces of Poland subject to Russia, but not forming part of the kingdom, the immense number of Russian troops rendered it impossible for the rising to be so universal, but even there the peasants seized every opportunity of joining the insurgents. And, in fact, wherever the standard of insurrection, or rather of independence, was displayed, all classes flocked to it with equal alacrity. Even in that part of Poland which

is subject to Prussia, into which no attempt was made to carry the insurrection, and where a formidable army kept the population in check, such was the enthusiasm pervading all orders for the cause, that no less than 24,000 volunteers escaped across the frontier, and joined the insurgents.

These facts shew, that the bad feeling lately displayed by a portion of the peasants in one part of Galicia, is by no means participated by the Polish peasantry in general. They also demonstrate that the cause of independence is not felt by the peasants to be, as it has been already shewn not to be in reality, the cause of a class.

How then is the recent conduct of the Galician peasants to be accounted for? By the demoralizing system of the Austrian Government.

It is a frightful reflection for Polish patriots, but one which must inevitably force itself on the minds of those who think deeply, that their unhappy country is in the hands of rulers who are not only hateful to the inhabitants, but whose measures are calculated to corrupt them and make them bad. Such reflections may well exasperate the most philosophic mind, and may render attempts, almost desperate, acceptable even to the calm and wise.

Galicia has been in the hands of the Austrians for now seventy-four years. It has always been the

system of this Government to rule its foreign subjects by fomenting discord between different classes—such is its policy in Lombardy, such was it for years in Hungary, such has it always been in Galicia. Aware of the national feelings pervading all classes, but chiefly the better educated, it has adopted a system, artfully contrived for exasperating the feelings of the peasants against their landlords, and preventing any concert between them. The landlord is invested with great power over his peasants, and he is not only allowed, but required to exercise it. It is the landlord who is called on to collect the taxes, to furnish recruits for the army, to try offences, and even to inflict on offenders corporal punishment. It is impossible that, under such a system, abuses should not occur, and even if they did not, that the peasants should owe any good will to those uniting in their persons the attributes of the tax gatherer, press-gang, and executioner. In every district there is an officer styled *mandatarius*, whose duty it is to hear appeals from the peasants against their landlords, and decide their differences. This functionary is appointed by Government. Thus, while the landlord is compelled to discharge many of the duties belonging to the executive, and to appear necessarily in the light of an oppressor, the representative of Government is looked on as a friend and a protector. The

landlords have repeatedly represented to the Government the necessity of improving the condition of the peasants, and placing things on a better footing, and the last Diet of Galicia, after much deliberation, agreed on a plan for the purpose, which was laid before the Emperor; but it was not sanctioned, and remained a dead letter.

It has long been the practice in Austria, when a soldier deserts, to offer a reward for his apprehension. This is constantly done and so well is it understood, that it is a usual thing in garrison towns to fire at sunrise as many guns as there are soldiers whose desertion has been discovered. The peasants in the neighbourhood require no further notice. They set off in quest of the fugitive, and if they catch him they bring him in and receive their reward. In the same way, rewards have at different times been offered in the Austrian territories for the capture of Polish Refugees; and, the persons in authority at Tarnow, and some other places, having resorted to this measure against the insurgent nobles, some desperate characters among the peasantry, allured by the prospect of gain, and influenced by personal animosity against their landlords, committed the barbarous massacre which has brought disgrace upon their name.

But to whom does the disgrace belong? on whose

head does the blood rest? In every country there are base, brutal, and sanguinary ruffians; but in what country are practices such as these permitted? What Government would not blush to owe to such means the support of its authority?

Yet these are the means by which, in Austria, with an army of 300,000 men, a disturbance has been quelled! And Prince Metternich, while boasting (in his official circular to the Austrian ministers at the different Courts of Europe) of the laws and good institutions of Galicia, has not a word to say in denial, or reprobation, of the barbarities to which they have given rise.

We have thus laid before you the actual state of the inhabitants of Poland. We have shewn you that they are suffering under the evil of subjection to foreign rule, that evil aggravated by persecution on account of religion, and by every species of cruel, degrading, and intolerable oppression, systematically practised in defiance of all laws, human and divine, and in contravention of treaties signed with your own country—that the misdeeds of a small part of the most ignorant class of the population of one district, cannot be charged on the nation; and that they are to be attributed to a system maintained for the purpose of demoralization by an unprincipled Government, and to the direct instigation of its agents—that insurrectionary attempts,



such as have lately taken place, must recur so long as the Poles are deprived of the rights that belong to them—that the present state of things is full of danger to Europe—that the independence of Poland would be productive of advantage to all countries, and to none more than our own, whose interest and whose honor are alike concerned in it—that the charges brought against the Polish patriots of seeking only the benefit of one class, and disregarding the welfare of the lower orders, are untrue; and that the apprehension of their inability to form a wise, safe, and good Government, is unfounded.

We have shown you that all the reasons for your sympathy and interest in this noble, ancient, and most unfortunate people, when we addressed you, on their behalf, fourteen years ago, exist still; and that they have acquired still greater force.

It is our province to diffuse information. It is not our object to excite revolts—still less to create delusive hopes.

We do not, therefore, call upon you to respond to the gallant but desperate attempt, that has lately been made by some of the Polish patriots for the recovery of their independence, by demonstrations, such as have been made, with so much generosity, and such noble feelings, by our high spirited neighbours in France.

We cannot but honour their lofty enthusiasm; and

we are filled with admiration at the ardour, the ability, the fervid and manly eloquence, which have been displayed in the Parliament of that country, in the great cause in which we are associated.

We doubt not that the subject will be brought before our own Parliament, that men will be found there to raise their voices in behalf of Poland, and that interference, at least so far as can be justified by existing treaties, will be demanded, and, we trust, obtained, from Government. We doubt not, that there is as much feeling for the Poles, as much profound conviction of the truth and justice of their cause, in this country, as in France, or any other. But Englishmen are not prone to demonstrations of feeling, without the prospect of being able speedily to follow them by action—and your silence, we know, must not be mistaken for indifference.

An insurrection begun by a few obscure individuals, without the concurrence, without the approbation, against the wishes of the leaders of the nation, without any events in other countries to render it opportune, without any visible elements of success, could excite in you no hope; and, therefore, you have expressed none.

When you see the Poles engaged in such a struggle for their independence, as shall justify, in reasonable men, the expectation of a favorable result, you will not, we are confident, withhold from them the expres-

sion of your sympathy; you will not deny to their righteous cause one particle of any support in your power to afford.

On the recent attempts at Cracow, in Galicia, and in Posen, we found no hopes. We view them with admiration for the indomitable spirit of patriotism by which they have been evoked, with sorrow for the misery they have occasioned; without hope, indeed, but without surprise. Such things must be—such will recur so long as the great mass of the nation is held in bondage—nor can a relaxation of severity, in some portions of the country, avail to prevent them. “If the heel of oppression be but lifted for a moment, what wonder if the trodden misery should rear its head and look around for vengeance.” This insurrection must, however, be admitted to supply a proof that the nation, which tyranny has taken so much pains to annihilate, is not yet extinct. It forms another bloody protest, made by the Poles, against the wrongs inflicted on their country; another of those battles, in a righteous cause, “bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,” which, if they do no more, at least serve to debar oppressors from the claim of prescription.

But we do not abandon the hope of seeing Poland restored to independence. We have confidence in the justice of the Almighty disposer of events.

The faults and errors of the Poles may have been many

and grievous. They have suffered, and are suffering for them. We cannot help, however, saying, that they were faults and errors incident to a great, a brave, and a generous people. And, at any rate, the Poles were a thousand times less culpable than the tyrants who attacked them, not on account of their faults, but rather through fear of their reformation. How long it may please Providence that the period of their trials and afflictions should be protracted, it is impossible to foresee, or by what means their restoration will be effected. The designs of the wicked may be suffered to prosper for a while, but we do not, and cannot, believe that the greatest crime that has disgraced the annals of modern history, will be permitted to be finally consummated.

Nb. We have confidence in the justice of the Almighty. We believe that the day will come, when Poland will be restored to independence.

Meantime it is the duty of the Poles to use every means to fit themselves, in the first place, for the struggle; in the next, for the proper use of success. It shall be our care to console and cheer them in the discharge of their great and noble, but arduous and trying task.

Fourteen years ago the Association solemnly pledged itself, "that, if you gave it your support, it would not slacken in the cause it had espoused."

During all those years, years of uninterrupted sorrow and suffering for Poland, we have continued our humble and obscure, and some might perhaps say, trivial, but unremitting labours,—endeavouring to mitigate to the patriots, the moral and physical ills of exile, to enable them to find sweet uses in adversity, and to preserve a lively interest in their cause by the diffusion of information. You have not refused us your support—you will continue to afford it us.

Strong in the righteousness of our cause, and fortified by your approbation, we shall continue our labours in the humble but steadfast confidence, that, however distant, the day at length will come, when power shall no longer prevail over right; and when this Association shall congratulate their fellow countrymen, and the world, on the triumph of humanity, of justice, and of religion, in the RESTORATION OF POLAND.

(By order of the Council.)

DUDLEY COUTTS STUART,

VICE-PRESIDENT.

WM. LL. BIRKBECK,

*Honorary Secretary.*

Sussex Chambers,

Duke Street, St. James's,

April, 1846.

SP

